

Funding will support sugarcane, oyster, and alligator research
October 7, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation that includes \$7,319,000 in investments Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) secured for agriculture projects that will benefit the Third Congressional District. The funding was included in the fiscal year 2010 Agriculture Appropriations bill (H.R. 2997). The conference report will now go to the Senate for passage, and then to the President to be signed in to law.

"Growing sugarcane, harvesting oysters, and farming alligators are part of our unique culture and economy in south Louisiana," said Rep. Melancon. "The funding I requested in this bill will support research boosting these important Louisiana agribusinesses, helping our farmers and commercial fishermen make their products stronger, healthier, and more resistant to disease."

Congressman Melancon requested the following earmarks, which were included in the conference report:

\$3,654,000 for the ARS Sugarcane Laboratory in Houma, LA. This will support continued construction of the laboratory, greenhouses, and other necessary facilities at the USDA's Agriculture Research Service's Sugarcane Research Laboratory's farm near Houma, LA. The current ARS research facilities are 15 miles from the farm and are not designed to handle an expanded program. Scientists at the Sugarcane Research Laboratory work to address the needs of the U.S. sugarcane industry through developing new sugarcane varieties and the production practices needed to grow these varieties.

\$3,422,000 to expand the ARS sugarcane research lab in Florida. Rep. Melancon co-sponsored a request for funding to construct and expand the USDA Agricultural Research Service Sugarcane Field Station at Canal Point, FL. This field station coordinates research with the ARS Sugarcane Research Lab in Houma, LA.

\$174,000 to help the Gulf Coast oyster industry reduce illnesses from *Vibrio vulnificus* in shellfish. This funding will be used for programs focused on the reduction of illnesses and deaths associated with *Vibrio vulnificus* in shellfish. The education program is part of the *Vibrio vulnificus* Management Plan (VMP) adopted in 2001 by a consortium of federal and state regulatory agencies and the shellfish industry. The plan required the Gulf States to reduce *Vibrio vulnificus* (V.v.) illnesses by 40%, collectively, by the end of 2006 and 60% collectively, by the end of 2008. If these illness reduction goals are not met by the end of 2008, the Gulf Coast oyster community could be required from May through September of each year to post-harvest-process all oysters that are sold for raw consumption, shuck all oysters harvested and label for cooking only, or close oyster harvesting areas.

\$69,000 for West Nile Virus Disease Prevention. Several parasites and infectious diseases, including West Nile Virus, have been identified as killing farmed alligators. This funding will be used by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to continue studying these infectious diseases and parasites that are harmful to alligators and alligator habitats.

Alligator farming is a \$60 million industry in Louisiana.

The Agriculture Appropriations bill will also make key investments in public health, food safety, rural communities, conservation and other priorities. The bill provides nearly \$3 billion for USDA rural development projects. To better ensure food safety, the bill also invests in food inspections of the U.S. meat and poultry supply and enhances FDA oversight of the safety of domestic and imported food and medical products.

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